

10/501107

DT04 Rec'd PCT/PTO 08 JUL 2004

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-13 (Canceled).

Claim 14 (New): A process for the preparation of a steel surface for hot-dip galvanising in a zinc based molten bath, comprising the steps of:  
cleaning the surface by electrocleaning, ultrasonic cleaning, or brush cleaning,  
pickling the surface, and  
applying a protective layer to the surface by immersion in a flux solution,  
wherein the cleaning is performed to a level of less than  $0.6 \text{ ug/cm}^2$  residual dirt, and the flux solution comprises a soluble bismuth compound.

Claim 15 (New): The process of claim 14, wherein the cleaning is performed by electrocleaning, whereby at least  $25 \text{ C/dm}^2$  is passed through the steel surface.

Claim 16 (New): The process of claim 14, wherein the pickling is performed by electropickling, ultrasonic pickling, or ion exchange pickling using an Fe (III) chloride solution.

Claim 17 (New): The process of claim 14, wherein the soluble bismuth compound is an oxide, a chloride, or a hydroxychloride.

Claim 18 (New): The process of claim 14, wherein the flux is an aqueous solution comprising between 0.3 and 2 wt% of bismuth.

Claim 19 (New): The process of claim 14, wherein the flux solution further comprises at least 7 wt% of  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ .

Claim 20 (New): The process of claim 19, wherein the flux solution comprises between 8 and 12 wt% of  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ .

Claim 21 (New): The process of claim 19, wherein the flux solution further comprises between 15 and 35 wt% of  $\text{ZnCl}_2$ .

Claim 22 (New): A process for single-dip galvanising of a steel surface using an aluminium containing molten zinc bath, comprising the steps of:

cleaning the surface by electrocleaning, ultrasonic cleaning, or brush cleaning,

pickling the surface,

applying a protective layer to the surface by immersion in a flux solution, and

galvanising the surface by single-dipping the surface in an aluminium containing molten zinc bath,

wherein the cleaning is performed to a level of less than  $0.6\mu\text{g}/\text{cm}^2$  residual dirt, and the flux solution comprises a soluble bismuth compound.

Claim 23 (New): The process of claim 22, wherein the aluminium containing zinc bath contains at least 0.15 wt% aluminium.

Claim 24 (New): The process of claim 22, wherein the aluminium containing zinc bath contains between 2 and 8 wt% aluminium.

Claim 25 (New): The process of claim 23, wherein the aluminium containing zinc bath is a Galfan bath.

Claim 26 (New): The process of claim 14, wherein the steel is in the form of a continuous product.

Claim 27 (New): The process of claim 22, wherein the steel is in the form of a continuous product.

Claim 28 (New): The process of claim 26, wherein the continuous product is steel wire, tube or plate.

Claim 29 (New): The process of claim 27, wherein the continuous product is steel wire, tube or plate.